



October 7, 2019

Dear Bowen Island Municipality,

We write in response to your letter dated October 1, 2019 on behalf of all 26 volunteer firefighters.

As you know, the Bowen Island Fire Departments consists of three paid positions including the Fire Chief, and 26 volunteer positions. The Fire Chief was hired on July 15, 2019 and until October 15 is still within the probationary period of a new employee.

We appreciate and acknowledge the point made in your letter that there can be challenges with any transition. We assure you that as a group we have made every effort to address those challenges.

In particular, as you know, representatives of the volunteer firefighters met with the Fire Chief twice in August to specifically express and seek to resolve our concerns. When the concerns were not resolved, the entire volunteer membership met with the Fire Chief in early September to reiterate and again try to resolve those concerns.

Unfortunately our concerns were not resolved and it became clear to us that they would not be resolved with the present Fire Chief. Accordingly, in September representatives of the volunteer firefighters then met with a representative of the Municipality's human resources department, and then again with representatives of the department and its governing committee. Our concerns were highlighted by the decision to cease all further practice and training sessions with the Fire Chief. It was not a decision we took lightly but by that point we believed it was necessary to underline the importance of the issues we had raised.

During the meetings with the Municipality's representatives, we attempted to make it clear that our concerns are fundamental to the operation of the fire department, that they are not reconcilable, and that the only remaining solution is to terminate the employment of the Fire Chief before or at the end of his probationary period. We trusted that when representatives of the entire volunteer membership, with decades of experience and service to this community, came to you to say in no uncertain terms that the relationship was fundamentally not working, you would accept that.

With that background, your letter of October 1, 2019 came as an unwelcome surprise. It is apparent that there is a disconnect between what we believed we made clear during our meetings with the Municipality, and whatever led to Council's September 30 resolution. Indeed, we were taken aback by the suggestion that the "first phase" of a

proposed independent “review” would focus on “training level requirements for volunteers”.

The volunteer firefighters of Bowen Island are committed to providing professional and effective services to all residents and visitors of our community. Collectively, we represent over 300 years of firefighting experience on Bowen Island. We are of course committed to training in accordance with provincial regulations, specifically the BC Fire Services Minimum Training Standards Playbook, and have been doing so since the earliest days of the department.

We want to continue serving the community but we can only do so under a Fire Chief who the membership has confidence in. Accordingly, in response to your letter of October 1, and with great regret, the entire volunteer membership of the department (all 26 volunteer firefighters), will be resigning on Thursday, October 10, 2019 at 4 pm if Chief Dickson remains as the Fire Chief at that time.

We will continue to serve the community as usual until Thursday, October 10, 2019 at 4 pm unless Chief Dickson resigns or his employment is terminated. In the meantime the membership is willing to attend a closed Council meeting to discuss the future of the fire department.

Sincerely,

The Bowen Island Fire Department Membership, comprised of:

